

The Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds

A Watershed Decade

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Foreword

The Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds (OWOW) is one of four program offices in the Office of Water (OW) at the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) headquarters in Washington, DC. OWOW shares responsibility for safeguarding the nation's water resources with three other OW offices, EPA's 10 regional offices, and the states, tribes, and territories that implement many aspects of their water programs. Several other federal departments and agencies are also partners in implementing our programs, notably the Army Corps of Engineers, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the United States Department of Agriculture. Our sister OW offices include the Office of Science and Technology (OST), the Office of Wastewater Management (OWM), and the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (OGWDW). Together with OWOW, these offices implement key components of the nation's core clean water programs. OST's responsibilities include issuing effluent guidelines and conducting activities related to the development of water quality standards and criteria. Among other responsibilities, OWM oversees implementation of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program, including storm water management, and the administration of the State Revolving Loan Fund. OGWDW is charged with the critical job of protecting public health by ensuring safe drinking water and protecting ground water.

OWOW's activities and programs further the objectives of several laws. These include the Clean Water Act; the Ocean Dumping Ban Act; the Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments; the Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act; the Shore Protection Act; the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act; and the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act.

This report chronicles OWOW's efforts and progress over the past decade. People are the key ingredients in OWOW's accomplishments, and our workforce is highly trained and motivated. Approximately 175 people currently work in OWOW, but over the history of the organization more than 400 people have served in the Office. Each of them has brought unique perspectives, skills, and ideas and has contributed in a variety of ways to the accomplishments outlined on the following pages. OWOW has made extensive use of internships, the Senior Environmental Employee Program, exchange programs with states and other federal agencies, and developmental rotations with regions and other EPA offices to broaden the skills and perspectives of our staff. Nearly half of the permanent workforce, at the time of this writing, are charter members of the organization.

There are many challenges ahead in protecting and restoring America's aquatic resources. The American public will be served by the creativity, dedication, and commitment of the people of OWOW as we meet those challenges.

To learn more about EPA's Office of Water, visit OW on the Web at www.epa.gov/ow or check out one of the four OW program offices:

Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds	www.epa.gov/owow
Office of Science and Technology	www.epa.gov/ost
Office of Wastewater Management	www.epa.gov/own
Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water	www.epa.gov/ogwdw

—Bob Wayland
Director, Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds

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1991	April 1991	Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds is approved by Administrator William Reilly.
	May 1991	First American Wetlands Month is established.
	May 1991	Approval of first Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) under National Estuary Program for Puget Sound.
	June 1991	Ocean dumping of sewage sludge ends.
	July 1991	Revisions to Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program under section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act.
1992	March 1992	EPA holds third national volunteer water monitoring conference.
	April 1992	1990 national water quality report to Congress (305(b)) is released.
	April 1992	Buzzards Bay CCMP is approved.
	May 1992	Peconic Bay, Coastal Bend and Bays, San Juan Bay, and Tillamook Bay are designated "Estuaries of National Significance."
	August 1992	EPA and Department of the Army sign agreement on elevation and resolution of EPA concerns with proposed wetlands permits.
	August 1992	EPA's Office of Research and Development publishes <i>An Approach to Improving Decision Making in Wetlands Restoration and Creation</i> .
	Fall 1992	"Turning the Tide on Trash," a curriculum on marine debris for grades K through 6, is completed.
1993	October 1992	With an EPA grant, the <i>Private Landowners' Wetlands Assistance Guide for Maryland</i> is published, the first in a series of state documents for voluntary stewardship.
	January 1993	Management measures guidance for coastal nonpoint source programs is issued.
	January 1993	Narragansett Bay CCMP is approved.
	March 1993	Watershed '93 attended by more than 1,000 people from federal agencies, states, local governments, watershed groups, and private sector.
	August 1993	Guidance on forestry best management practices to protect wetlands is issued.
	August 1993	OWOW represents EPA in development, with eight other agencies, of a new federal wetlands plan to provide an effective and flexible approach to protection of wetlands.
	August 1993	Guidance on the level of review necessary and the flexibility afforded under wetlands regulations is issued.
1994	December 1993	San Francisco Bay CCMP is approved.
	January 1994	Fourth national directory of volunteer monitoring programs lists 516 programs in 45 states engaging 340,000 volunteers in monitoring and cleanup projects.
	January 1994	EPA and the Departments of Agriculture, Army, and Interior sign agreement to streamline wetland procedures for farmers.
	March 1994	EPA approves New Jersey's assumption of the wetlands permit program.
	March 1994	1992 national water quality report to Congress (305(b)) is released.
	April 1994	EPA holds fourth national volunteer monitoring conference.
	May 1994	Stakeholder Initiative on Alaska wetlands issues completed, provides greater incorporation of unique environmental and social circumstances.
	October 1994	Watershed Academy is launched.
	October 1994	<i>The Watershed Approach—Our Framework for Ecosystem Protection</i> is released.
	October 1994	National Water Quality Monitoring Council convenes, chaired by EPA and USGS.
	October 1994	Congress increases funding for Wetlands Program Development Grants to \$15 million.

October 1994	Congress increases funding for state nonpoint source grants to \$100 million.
November 1994	Albemarle-Pamlico Sounds and Long Island Sound CCMPs are approved.
December 1994	With <i>The Dredging Process in the U.S.: An Action Plan for Improvement</i> , a national dredging policy is completed.
February 1995	OWOW-led Intergovernmental Task Force on Monitoring Water Quality (ITFM) publishes <i>Strategy for Improving Water-Quality Monitoring in the United States</i> .
February 1995	EPA publishes a compilation of 33 fact sheets on wetlands and programs that protect them.
March 1995	Galveston Bay and Santa Monica Bay CCMPs are approved.
March 1995	EPA and Department of the Army issue guidance on flexibility afforded to small landowners for section 404 discharges affecting up to 2 acres of nontidal wetlands.
June 1995	Delaware Inland Bays CCMP is approved.
July 1995	Charlotte Harbor, New Hampshire Estuaries, Morro Bay, Mobile Bay, Maryland Coastal Bays, Columbia River, and Barnegat Bay designated "Estuaries of National Significance."
October 1995	Sarasota Bay CCMP is approved.
November 1995	EPA and four other federal agencies issue <i>Federal Guidance for the Establishment, Use, and Operation of Mitigation Banks</i> as a means of achieving flexible and effective compensatory wetland mitigation.
November 1995	EPA collaborates with various stakeholders to develop forestry guidance that enhances protection of valuable wetlands and gives greater certainty to landowners.
January 1996	Uniform National Discharge Standards provisions are added to the Clean Water Act to control discharges from Department of Defense vessels.
April 1996	1994 national water quality report to Congress (305(b)) is released.
May 1996	EPA establishes nine key elements for strengthened state nonpoint source programs.
May 1996	<i>Environmental Principles for Golf Courses in the United States</i> is released by EPA and Golf and Environment Initiative.
May 1996	National Marine Debris Monitoring Program is initiated.
June 1996	<i>The Watershed Approach Framework</i> is published, establishing guiding principles for watershed management.
July 1996	Agreement reached on plan to dredge New York/New Jersey Harbor to protect the environment and promote economic growth.
August 1996	EPA holds fifth national volunteer monitoring conference.
August 1996	EPA issues clean marina handbook demonstrating economic benefits of sound environmental management.
September 1996	Delaware Estuary and Massachusetts Bays CCMPs are approved.
October 1996	Casco Bay CCMP is approved.
October 1996	Web-based training begins with <i>Academy 2000</i> (now called <i>Watershed Academy Web</i>).
November 1996	<i>Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter</i> is signed.
November 1996	Indian River Lagoon CCMP is approved.
December 1996	Barataria-Terrebonne Estuaries CCMP is approved.
January 1997	Biological Assessment of Wetlands Working Group is established to foster state, tribal, and local assessment of wetland conditions.
January 1997	American Heritage Rivers Initiative is announced.
March 1997	Tampa Bay and New York/New Jersey Harbor CCMPs are approved.
April 1997	<i>Surf Your Watershed</i> goes live on the Internet, allowing citizens to type in their Zip Codes to learn about their local watersheds.

May 1997	Launching of “Year of the Ocean” (1998).
June 1997	EPA holds first tribal wetlands workshop with the Oneida Nation.
August 1997	New York/New Jersey Mud Dump Site is closed; Historic Area Remediation Site is opened.
September 1997	Conditional approval of coastal nonpoint source programs for Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Michigan, and Wisconsin.
October 1997	Index of Watershed Indicators, describing health of the nation's 2,262 watersheds, is released.
October 1997	Conditional approval of coastal nonpoint source programs for Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Guam, American Samoa, and Northern Mariana Islands.
November 1997	Following <i>Pfiesteria</i> outbreaks on the mid-Atlantic coast, EPA and other federal agencies issue federal response plan.
November 1997	Conditional approval of coastal nonpoint source programs for Florida, New Hampshire, New York, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands.
January 1998	Conditional approval of Oregon's coastal nonpoint source program.
January 1998	EPA's Science Advisory Board publishes <i>Ecological Impacts and Evaluation Criteria for the Use of Structures in Marsh Management</i> .
February 1998	Conditional approval of coastal nonpoint source programs for South Carolina, North Carolina, Maine, and Virginia.
February 1998	EPA and eight other federal agencies establish national goal of 100,000-acre annual net gain in wetlands by 2005.
April 1998	1996 national water quality report to Congress (305(b)) is released.
May 1998	EPA celebrates American Wetlands Month with publication of the booklet <i>Wetlands—Our Vital Link Between Land and Water</i> .
June 1998	Conditional approval of coastal nonpoint source programs for Alabama, Connecticut, Washington, Hawaii, Alaska, Louisiana, and California.
June 1998	U.S. Coral Reef Task Force is created.
June 1998	National Oceans Conference held in Monterey, California.
July 1998	EPA holds first national water quality monitoring conference.
August 1998	Version 1 of modernized STORET is released to meet emerging data needs associated with watershed protection.
September 1998	<i>Environmental Management Handbook</i> , a guide to environmental protection for ports, is published.
September 1998	10th anniversary of International Coastal Cleanup Campaign.
September 1998	Fifth national directory of volunteer monitoring programs lists 770 programs in all 50 states, engaging 460,000 volunteers is published.
October 1998	Congress increases state nonpoint source grants to \$200 million.
October 1998	Coral Reef Task Force convenes in Key Biscayne, Florida.
November 1998	Congress passes Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act (HABHRCA).
November 1998	EPA joins 15 federal agencies in issuing stream restoration handbook.
February 1999	Coastal Bend Bays CCMP is approved.
February 1999	Creation of National Invasive Species Council.
March 1999	Watershed Information Network (WIN), a roadmap to consolidated watershed information and services, is launched on the Internet.
April 1999	EPA makes maps of state-listed impaired waters available on the Internet.
April 1999	First Watershed Assistance Grants are awarded.
May 1999	First Five-Star Restoration Grant is awarded.

2000	May 1999	Final rule clarifying which ditching, channelization, and land-clearing activities are subject to Clean Water Act wetland requirements is published.
	May 1999	EPA and Navy complete final regulations for Phase I “Uniform National Discharge Standards (UNDS).”
	July 1999	With an EPA grant, the National Association of Counties and the International City and County Managers Association publish <i>Protecting Wetlands, Managing Watersheds—Local Government Case Studies</i> .
	October 1999	Maryland Coastal Bays and Columbia River CCMPs are approved.
	December 1999	Maryland becomes first state with fully approved coastal nonpoint source program.
	December 1999	Tillamook Bay CCMP is approved.
	March 2000	Nationwide Permit 26, single largest source of generally permitted wetland losses, is eliminated and replaced by activity-specific permits.
	March 2000	Coral Reef Task Force publishes <i>National Action Plan for Coral Reef Conservation</i> .
	March 2000	Federal court holds, in <i>Pronsolino v. Marcus</i> , that Clean Water Act authorizes EPA to include nonpoint sources of pollutants in section 303(d)/TMDL program.
	April 2000	Full approval of Rhode Island’s coastal nonpoint source program.
2001	April 2000	EPA holds second national water quality monitoring conference.
	April 2000	EPA holds sixth national volunteer monitoring conference.
	May 2000	EPA and USGS jointly release National Hydrography Dataset (NHD), a geographic database for integrating and mapping information about U.S. surface waters.
	May 2000	<i>River Corridor and Wetland Restoration</i> web site launched.
	May 2000	EPA and Environmental Law Institute (ELI) celebrate 10 years of National Wetlands Awards.
	June 2000	100th Five-Star Restoration Grant awarded.
	June 2000	1998 national water quality report to Congress (305(b)) is released.
	July 2000	Revised regulations for the Total Maximum Daily Load program are published.
	July 2000	California’s coastal nonpoint source program is fully approved.
	October 2000	Congress passes Estuaries and Clean Waters Act.
2002	October 2000	San Juan Bay CCMP is approved.
	October 2000	Congress increases state nonpoint source grants to \$238 million.
	October 2000	EPA and three other federal agencies issue guidance on use of in-lieu-fee arrangements for compensatory wetland mitigation.
	October 2000	Puerto Rico’s coastal nonpoint source program is fully approved.
	October 2000	Release of updated draft guidance on management measures for agriculture.
	November 2000	EPA publishes <i>Tribal Wetland Program Highlights</i> in collaboration with 12 tribes and native organizations.
	December 2000	Congress passes Coral Reef Conservation Act.
	December 2000	EPA releases updated guidance on management measures for marinas and recreational boating.
	January 2001	Morro Bay CCMP is approved.
	January 2001	Action plan to address Gulf hypoxia is transmitted to Congress.
2003	March 2001	<i>Guiding Principles for Constructed Treatment Wetlands</i> is published.
	March 2001	EPA marks 10-year anniversary of its toll-free Wetlands Helpline (1-800-832-7828, contractor-operated).
	April 2001	EPA announces implementation of the “Tulloch Rule” to protect wetlands from discharges of dredged material associated with mechanized equipment.
	May 2001	<i>Volunteer Wetland Monitoring Resource Guide</i> is published.